UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social
Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.4/Sub.2/2000/43
9 August 2000

Original: ENGLISH

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Sub-Commission on the Promotion
and Protection of Human Rights
Fifty-second session
Agenda item 12 (a) (i)

REVIEW OF FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS IN FIELDS WITH WHICH THE SUB-COMMISSION HAS BEEN OR MAY BE CONCERNED: REVIEW OF DEVELOPMENTS CONCERNING RECOMMENDATIONS AND DECISIONS RELATING, INTER ALIA, TO: PROMOTION, PROTECTION AND RESTORATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AT NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVELS

Note by the secretariat

1. At its 4th meeting, on 2 August 2000, the Sub-Commission adopted the recommendation of its Bureau and decided, following the practice of the Commission on Human Rights with regard to national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights, to allow such national institutions to participate in its work and, upon a written request, to give them the floor for short statements under agenda item 12 (a) (i) entitled "Promotion, protection and restoration of human rights at national, regional and international levels".

2. On 4 August 2000, the Executive Secretary of the National Commission on Human Rights of Mexico addressed a letter to the Chairperson of the Sub-Commission in which he stated that, being unable to stay in Geneva until the Sub-Commission takes up agenda item 12 (a) (i), he would request the Chairperson to circulate his statement in written form.

3. Following the agreement of the Bureau of the Sub-Commission, the statement of the National Commission on Human Rights of Mexico is reproduced in the annex to the present document. *

* Reproduced as received, in the original language and English only.

Annex

STATEMENT BY MR FRANCISCO OLGUIN, EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS OF MEXICO, TO THE SUB-COMMISSION ON THE PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AT ITS FIFTY-SECOND SESSION

Geneva, August 2000

It is a particular pleasure for me to be able to address the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights on this first occasion that national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights have been given the opportunity to do so. I congratulate the Sub-Commission on its decision which, in its small way, may be described as historic, mirroring the decision taken by the Commission itself in 1996. Both decisions imply a recognition of the role played by national institutions in the promotion and protection of all human rights and, hence, the strengthening of democracy and good governance in the countries concerned.

I am confident that fresh initiatives will be taken in the near future, opening the way to greater participation by national institutions, giving them a separate, independent status so that they can participate in their own right in the work of the Commission on Human Rights and its subsidiary bodies as - as the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr Kofi Annan, has said - most Governments and non-governmental organizations have repeatedly requested.

Allowing national institutions to participate with a status of their own, separate from governmental delegations, would imply recognition of a situation that actually exists, and would have many advantages: it would increase their independence and autonomy vis-à-vis Governments, enhance their collaborative ties with other, similar institutions, make it easier for them to work with the United Nations by giving them access to documentation and information about United Nations activities, provide alternative sources of information and analysis on human rights and permit better follow-up of recommendations by the appropriate United Nations bodies; they could report to human rights gatherings on their activities, publicly share information with other national institutions, Governments and non-governmental organizations, and subsidiary United Nations bodies could consult them or request information on human rights-related topics.

That, Madam Chairperson, is not the case at present. We do not qualify as experts, we neither do nor should belong to national delegations, but neither are we non-governmental organizations. When I got to this meeting I could not even find a place to sit or a sign acknowledging the name of the institution I represent. It is paradoxical that a national human rights institution has no real capacity at the Commission on Human Rights and its subsidiary bodies. There are historical reasons for the absence of a specific status since the proliferation of ombudsmen is a recent phenomenon, but it seems ever more timely and appropriate to acknowledge, nay, support, the vigorous growth in such offices which are now to be found in a great many countries.

I do not wish to detain the Sub-Commission longer with thoughts on a subject which, I am sure, already commands an extensive convergence of opinions. I shall simply say that the National Commission on Human Rights of Mexico, besides carrying out the tasks for which it was created with genuine dedication and commitment, strives to support the growth of similar institutions in other countries, especially in Latin America through the intermediary of the Ibero-American Federation of Ombudsmen (FIO), its experience and accomplishments are at the disposal of the international community for extending this machinery, which has proven its worth in the protection and promotion of human rights.